

**REMARKS**

Reconsideration and withdrawal of the grounds of rejection set forth in the outstanding Office Action are respectfully requested for the reasons articulated below.

Claims 1, 17 and 31-32 have been rejected under 35 USC § 103(a) as obvious over Webb et al. (US Patent 3,422,213), while claims 12, 14 and 16 have been rejected as unpatentable over Webb et al. in view of Pollard (US Patent 6,024,322). However, Applicants respectfully submit that all claims which remain of record in this application distinguish over both Webb et al. and the combination of Webb et al and Pollard.

Claim 1 of the present application defines a solar cell connector which includes first and second connection areas that are formed in a metal strip, and which comprise tabs for connection to respective solar cells. A centrally situated compensation section is formed in the metal strip as well, integrally therewith. The compensation section comprises a single central opening which is intermediate the first and second connection areas, and is delimited by a surrounding marginal area of the metal strip. In particular, claim 1 further recites that, "the compensation section and the central opening are one of round, oval, and polygonal." Applicants respectfully submit that the latter feature of the invention is neither taught nor suggested in the cited Webb et al. patent, and

that the structure disclosed in Webb et al. cannot be easily be modified to replicate the claimed invention.

With regard to the limitation in question, the Office Action states that a person of ordinary skill in the art would have found it obvious to modify the Webb et al. structure to provide a round, oval or polygonal compensation section and central opening. However, as noted at page 8, lines 8-12 of the Remarks which accompany the Amendment dated June 30, 2008, due to the structure and method of fabrication of the connector strips in Webb et al., it would difficult or impossible to modify them to provide such a round, oval or polygonal central opening.

In response to this observation, the Office Action at page 4 states that the determination of patentability is based on the product itself, meaning presumably that the method by which the claimed apparatus is manufactured is irrelevant. Applicants agree with this general proposition. However, it does not address the gist of Applicant's argument. Specifically, Applicant notes that its argument is not based, on the method of manufacture of the claimed invention, but rather on the method of manufacture disclosed in Webb et al. The latter could not readily be adapted to create a solar cell connector as defined in claim 1, including a compensation section and a central opening that are round, oval or polygonal, without inventive activity. In particular, as noted, for example, at

column 2, lines 26-47; column 3, lines 13-39 and lines 52-63, the connector according to Webb et al. is manufactured by chemically milling connector strips to form areas which include short strands or sections which connect adjacent portions of the flat strip. The groups of strand like portions 48, 50, 52, and 54, 56 and 58, can be seen, for example in Figure 2, a portion of which is reproduced at page 5 of the Office Action.

It is apparent that the central opening in Figure 2, between the groups of strands 48, 50, 52 on the one hand and 54, 56 and 58 on the other hand, is not oval, round or polygonal, since it has sharp points at either end. Moreover, in view of the method of manufacture disclosed in Webb et al., it is apparent that the connector disclosed therein cannot easily be modified to provide a compensation section and central opening which are in fact oval, round or polygonal. At the very least, unknown manufacturing steps would be necessary.

It is also apparent that the structure of the solar cell connector, as illustrated for example in Figure 1 of the present application, is substantially simpler than that disclosed in Webb et al. Moreover, the structure of the present invention also avoids the creation of a critical stress area such as the sharp v-shaped areas to the right and left of the central opening in Figure 2 of Pollard, where the strands 52 and 54 split apart.

Because Webb et al. cannot be modified in any readily ascertainable manner in order to replicate the invention as claimed, including the compensation section and central opening which are oval, round or polygonal, Applicants respectfully submit that all claims of record distinguish over Webb et al.

The Pollard patent, on the other hand, has been cited only in respect of claims 12, 14 and 16, as disclosing a connector which comprises a precious metal or conductive material with a precious metal coating that is selected from the group consisting of gold and silver, and that the conductive material comprises one of molybdenum and another element of the sixth subgroup of the periodic table of elements. Accordingly, Pollard does not teach or suggest a modification of claim 1, 31 or 32 which would replicate the features recited in claim 1, and discussed above.

Finally, Applicants note that claim 32 further distinguishes over the Webb et al. patent, reciting that the tabs "project substantially normal to said marginal area of said metal stripe," which is not so in Webb et al. Moreover, for the reasons set forth above, it is not apparent how Webb et al. could be modified to include such a feature. Accordingly, claim 32 distinguishes over the cited references for this additional reason.

If there are any questions regarding this response or the application in general, a telephone call to the undersigned would be appreciated since this should expedite the prosecution of the application for all concerned.

If necessary to effect a timely response, this paper should be considered as a petition for an Extension of Time sufficient to effect a timely response, and please charge any deficiency in fees or credit any overpayments to Deposit Account No. 05-1323 (Docket # 010408.52444US).

Respectfully submitted,

  
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